

Study of town management recommended

Suggestion made to selectmen

By John Chaffee
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DUXBURY — A committee should be created to conduct a comprehensive study of town management, selectmen were told last night.

The nine-member bylaw review committee proposed that a study committee review all aspects of town management and recommend any changes in time for consideration at the 1998 annual town meeting.

The study is needed because local government operates "as a federation of loosely integrated, semiautonomous enterprises," the bylaw review committee says.

After the bylaw review committee gave selectmen a progress report Dec. 9, Town Clerk Nancy Oates angrily denounced the committee for considering the possibility of changing her position from elective to appointive.

Although the bylaw review committee has not recommended changing the status of any elected official, it says a town management study committee should examine the role of "existing boards, committees and positions, their authority and whether they should be elected, appointed or eliminated."

The bylaw committee thinks the proposed study committee should also:

- Examine the role of selectmen, the possibility of enlarging the board from three members to five, the possibility of less-frequent selectmen's meetings and the possibility of the board spending more of its time on establishing policy.

- Consider the possibility of expanding the town manager's authority to cover all town employees other than those in the school department.

- Examine the relationship of elected and appointed boards, committees and positions to the town manager.

- Look into the possibility of consolidating human resource functions and authority under the town manager.

Duxbury

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- Consider the feasibility of consolidating all town financial functions — including assessing, accounting, treasury and tax collection — within one department.

Town meeting has rejected previous proposals to consolidate financial functions.

The bylaw review committee also submitted a list of changes to the town's general bylaws, most of which would bring the bylaws into compliance with the 1987 special act of the Legislature that created the town manager position.

The proposed bylaw changes should be submitted to the annual town meeting in March, the committee said.

Unlike communities with a charter, local government in Duxbury operates under the terms of the special act and general bylaws that can be changed by a majority vote of town meeting.

The two selectmen at last night's meeting, Chairman James Murphy and Friend Weiler, said they would consider the committee's recommendations but did not want to act until colleague Margaret Kearney was present.